

The Collision Project, Episode 1: Translation

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

By

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Abstract

When two neutron stars collide in outer space, they either create a black hole or a new star. The Collision Project podcast does not feature colliding stars, but instead works to collide ideas to create something new. By bringing together the thoughts and opinions of people with different perspectives and worldviews, this podcast episode produces a new and deeper understanding of broad or contentious topics. This pilot episode, entitled "Translation," includes interviews with three guests who are translators in different fields: language, technology, and theatre. As the host, I then synthesized the three responses and provided the audience with thought-provoking takeaways. Audience feedback became an integral part of this thesis process, and the feedback collected from a focus group led to a second, final draft of the podcast. In a world of divisions, this podcast embraces different opinions rather than hiding from them, and simultaneously invites listeners to join in.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Jennifer Blackmer for participating as my faculty advisor, and for continuing to challenge and expand my ideas of what is possible.

Thank you to Annie Burnett, Paul Gestwicki, and Matthew Reeder for their wonderful words and incredible insights.

Thank you to Sean Ashcraft and Indiana Public Radio for allowing me to use their studios to record the interviews featured in this podcast episode.

And finally, thank you to my family for raising me to question constantly, listen attentively, and never stop reaching for the stars.

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Process Analysis Statement

Throughout my academic career, I have been learning how to be a better communicator. Theatre, at its core, is about sharing ideas with other people by telling stories clearly and effectively onstage. Storytelling is something I do in my daily life as well as my academic work. I am constantly seeking out new stories told in new ways that stretch my understanding of how I can better tell a story onstage. This is how I discovered podcasts. Podcasts are a relatively new medium in the world of storytelling. The technology for podcasting dates back to 2004, and the popularity of the medium grew again in 2014 as podcasts burst back into the mainstream (McHugh 66). At their most basic level, podcasts are audio or video files shared with the public that can cover a wide range of topics from music and comedy to murder mysteries and hard hitting journalism, but most podcast programming regardless of genre typically follows the basic structure of talk radio (Pullen). Podcasts are a more personal way for anyone with a decent microphone and basic recording technology to reach out to a wider audience and tell them a story, ask them a question, or share a new point of view. The podcast genre allows for a more informal narrative and is “centered on a strong relationship between host and listener” (McHugh 65). For my senior honors thesis I knew I wanted to tell a story that reached out to people in a very personal way, and I also knew that I wanted to expand my skills and explore a new method of telling stories. Creating a podcast episode turned out to be the perfect way to achieve my thesis goals.

My podcast episode has grown and changed a great deal since the idea was first planted in my mind, not only technically but also intellectually. At the beginnings of the project, I had planned on three episodes that would be a part of a larger series called “The Big UN.” The idea behind this series was that each episode would focus on one seemingly insurmountable idea and

how people tried to overcome the odds against them. Each episode would be titled with a word starting with “un” such as “untranslatable” or “unbeatable” – thereby sparking the podcast title “The Big UN.” As I started researching and thinking deeply about my subject, I realized that the core of the series was too negative for me. I wanted my podcast to focus on the positive and helpful things my interview guests would have to say, and I decided to put the initial idea to rest and dig more into the core of what I wanted to research. I realized my favorite part of “The Big UN” was my first episode, “Untranslatable,” and its topic of translation: what can we translate, what can we not translate, and why is it important to translate anyway? I am incredibly fascinated by translation because it is part of the core of my major in theatre and acting. Communicating to an audience and, essentially, translating a story to them is at the center of my work. As a result of all of this thought, I chose to keep the focus of my podcast episode on translation and I sought out reading materials to inspire a new overarching theme for the ideal future series. I found the book *Found in Translation* written by Nataly Kelly, a Vice President of International Operations, and Jost Zetsche, a German-American translator, and I was immediately hooked. The book immediately challenged my perspective on translation as it explores the multitude of uses for translation, and provides many stories and examples of how translation is used in different ways each and every day across the world (Kelly). I was amazed to see how much deeper the definition of translation could be than I had originally thought. This inspired me to stretch my own definition of translation and that led into my choices for who I was going to interview for my podcast. I originally planned to have three different translators of language, one each for Spanish, German, and Chinese. But after reading *Found in Translation*, I adjusted my initial line of thinking. I began to wonder what other areas use translation and this is how I chose my three podcast guests.

The first guest, Annie Burnett, is a Spanish translator. Beyond her, though, the other two guests do not translate languages. My second guest was Paul Gestwicki, a professor of Computer Science and Game Design at Ball State University, and the third was Matthew Reeder, a professor in the Department of Theatre and Dance at BSU and also a director. I wanted to take the audience on a journey along with me and expand their view of translation just as mine was expanded. This is why I did include a translator of language, and why I eventually placed her interview first in the lineup of three. I wanted to start my listeners off where I started, and slowly expand their horizons with me as their narrator and guide along the way.

Once my guests were chosen, I needed to craft the interview questions that would become the foundation of my podcast episode. I knew that these interviews would help me form my themes, and from the interviews I would be analyzing and curating my own response. How would I keep the questions focused on my topic, but general enough that the guests could provide information that would surprise me, help guide my summary and analysis, and leave room for their own questions and personal thoughts on the topic? Also, how would I craft the questions so that I could compare and contrast the different answers effectively later in the process? I decided to come up with five general starting questions for each guest. I kept the core of the questions the same across disciplines, but I specified wording depending on the area of expertise of the specific guest. For example, a core question I had was: "Are there things we cannot translate?" For Annie, I asked her if there were ideas or concepts she thought we could not translate from Spanish to English (Burnett), for Paul I asked if he thought we could translate emotion through technology (Gestwicki), and for Matt I asked if he thought we could translate meaning to an audience through theatre (Reeder). All of these three questions were nuanced in their own ways, but all pointed back to the same core thought. This allowed me to compare and

contrast answers without forcing the guests to answer questions they could not connect to personally and professionally. I emailed each guest their set of questions ahead of time so they were not caught off guard in the interview room. I utilized the studios at Indiana Public Radio and scheduled a one-hour time block for each of my three guests. The questions worked perfectly in the room with the guests. Having the questions ahead of time made them more relaxed during the interview, and all three interviewees provided me with information that surprised me.

As I clarified and focused my podcast theme the interview process, my technical knowledge of podcast production also grew as I worked in the IPR studios. Each interview went more smoothly than the last as I quickly learned how to better work the equipment and microphones. I learned during the interview process that it was better if I quieted my own vocal reactions to the guest responses. This way, their responses to my questions would shine uninterrupted. After the interviews were saved, the next step was to edit the interviews and clean them up. Editing the interviews was one of the most time consuming parts of this thesis. I listened to each 30-50 minute interview multiple times in order to trim it in a way that was efficient in regards to podcast length, but also still did justice to the original interview and did not compromise the overall integrity of the guest's responses. My process for editing was to first listen to the interviews once through to re-familiarize myself with the questions and responses. The second listen through was primarily for what I called "time stamping." I would write down the times where phrases or responses I thought were the most insightful, inspiring, and connected to the other interviews came up. This way, I could easily find the answers later when I was editing the podcast as a whole. Time stamping was time-consuming but helpful later on in the editing process as it made my work more efficient and I was less likely to be distracted by the sheer length of the interviews. After time stamping was complete, I had to edit the interview

pieces into three cohesive segments. This required a great deal of focus and patience as I had to make sure my cuts were clean and I had to make the different pieces sound as though they were cohesive and had a good flow. I spent a lot of time editing fade-ins and fade-outs so there were no abrupt cutoffs, but this work made the final product cleaner and helped it sound more professional. After all of the interviews were cut and cleaned up, I had to record my own introduction, conclusion, and transitions between interviews. This was a point in my process where the technical learning shifted once again to learning more about my personal analyzing and curating process.

Once I had the three interviews cut and cleaned, I listened to them again, this time with a notebook and pen in hand. I wrote lists of what stuck out to me in each interview; what surprised me, what drew me in, and what ideas stayed with me after I was finished listening. After doing this note taking with each of the three interviews, I flipped to a new page in my notebook and charted out the similarities between the interviews (see Appendix B for images). After listening to the three guests speak, what did I think translation was now? The words and phrases I wrote down became the deep analysis that I included in my original conclusion for the podcast episode. I called the five major intersections “Collision Moments” – where the three interviews collided to create new understanding. It was a combination of this analysis and my love of astronomy that led me to the new title of my podcast episode and series.

From my first year at Ball State, I fell in love with outer space. I visited the planetarium nearly every weekend, I narrated one of their programs, I took an honors colloquium that dove into quantum theory and relativity, and I read more books about astronomy and planetary bodies. This personal research during my four years in college taught me that when two neutron stars collide in outer space, they either create a black hole or a new star. I realized that this was the

perfect metaphor for what I was trying to accomplish with this podcast episode. Bringing people together from different disciplines and walks of life, and colliding their ideas together in one space in an effort to create new understanding. This line of thinking is why I have named my project "The Collision Project."

The only technical element left to complete was the choosing and editing of the music transitions. I wanted upbeat and catchy music that would give the podcast some life and had different levels within it so I could use certain parts of the song in certain parts of the podcast. For example, I used a musical build for the introduction and a lower intensity section of the music for the interview transition underscoring. The addition of music kept the podcast moving forward instead of feeling stagnant, and also eased transitions between interviews and my opinions. The finishing touch was to transfer the file from an Adobe Audition work session to a finished mp3 that could be shared freely as one, single, finished file.

Podcasts are created to be consumed. The only way to know if a podcast is successful is to find out if its ideas are being effectively translated to an audience. Once my podcast episode was finalized, I knew I needed feedback that would eventually become a part of the process as a whole. I chose to create a focus group of my peers. I sent them each a copy of the finished podcast along with some thought-provoking questions to think about as they listened. I gave the focus group two weeks to listen to the podcast and I scheduled a one hour, in-person feedback meeting. For this meeting, I developed a feedback form that asked a series of both qualitative and quantitative analysis questions. Some questions asked them to rate different elements of my podcast on a scale of 1-5, and some questions were short answers. At the meeting, I had each respondent fill out a form, and then I proceeded to moderate a discussion that included further exploration into the questions on the physical form as well as additional questions I wanted to

only discuss out loud in the group. During this discussion, I took detailed notes on respondent answers. I then compiled both the physical forms and the notes I took during the discussion into a summary that prefaces the feedback appendix (Appendix A of this package). It was incredibly important to me to know how an audience was interpreting and taking in the information I had curated for them. In my opinion, this was the best way to analyze the success of my podcast in reaching its intended goal. My main goal for this podcast and hopefully the future series is to launch people into thinking about broad or divisive topics in new ways, and the best way to analyze the success of my project was to bring in real people and get their opinions.

I thought my podcast episode would be finished here. Before my feedback session, I had no plans to continue editing further because I felt that it was unnecessary for the thesis project. But the feedback I received was simply too inspiring. After the insightful focus group discussion, I was incredibly motivated to make the changes suggested to me by my peers immediately. I decided to make a detailed and specific to-do list from the responses, and go back to the editing booth. I mainly focused on clarifying my introduction, adding more of my own opinion and analysis between interviews, and strengthening my concluding statement. This inspiration from my feedback session is why I have included two versions of my podcast in this thesis package. The first is the final version of the podcast that is the result of my own thoughts about the first draft and the feedback I received from my focus group. I have also included the original, draft podcast that the respondents were commenting on to clearly illustrate the journey from draft to final copy. I also published my final podcast to Apple Podcasts for public distribution, and plan to also submit the podcast to Google Play to grow my audience further.

Overall, I hope this podcast will continue to grow and change as I continue the series beyond this pilot episode, just as I have grown as a learner, a researcher, and a communicator

during my four years here at BSU. I learn best when I challenge my own ideas and invite constructive criticism to push my work to the next level. I research most effectively when I listen to the insight of other people and when I am truly passionate about a topic. I communicate best when I make sure to see all sides of an issue and when I am able to listen effectively to people with different perspectives other than my own. I believe that this podcast and thesis project as a whole truly encapsulates my journey as a learner through my four years of college and even just in this thesis process itself. My goal for this podcast is the same goal I have for myself. To never stop listening to other points of view, to never stop learning from those who are different from me, and to continue to challenge my perspectives in an effort to become a more well rounded and open hearted human being.

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Appendix A: Podcast Feedback

After hosting a feedback discussion in which my focus group filled out physical feedback forms and then discussed the form questions and the podcast as a whole, I was able to realize that my focus group wanted two major things in a podcast edit: a stronger introduction, and a cleaner conclusion. Below is a summary of the collected feedback and my response actions, and I have also included the physical forms from my respondents in the thesis package within this appendix.

1. Re-work the introduction

- a. My focus group wanted to hear about my neutron star metaphor at the beginning of the podcast rather than at the end. They felt that explaining the concept of the podcast sooner would better introduce my audience to what they were about to listen to.
- b. Because of this feedback, I lengthened my introduction to make it more inviting and personal, while addressing the origin story of the podcast title.

2. Instead of five “collision moments” at the end of the podcast, pick one. Then move the other ideas between interviews.

- a. The group agreed that I presented too many takeaways at the end of the podcast, making it overwhelming and somewhat repetitive, instead of strong and focused. They loved the ideas that were present, but wanted to have heard those ideas between interviews instead of having them all lumped in at the end of the piece.
- b. After hearing this feedback, I reevaluated my “collision moments” and then cut them out of the ending of the podcast. I wrote longer analysis pieces for between interviews, making the middle of the podcast more personal and engaging, while also strengthening the podcast sendoff.

The Collision Project: Feedback

On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 = low and 5 = high), how would you rate the overall success of the podcast in making you think about the topic in a new way?

1

2

3

4

5

On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 = unlikely and 5 = very likely), how likely is it that you would subscribe to more episodes like this one?

1

2

3

4

5

Was anything confusing to you about the episode? How would you make it less confusing?

At times it wasn't always easy to see the point of what was being discussed, but bringing everything together at the end fixed that.

What was the most impactful part of the podcast to you? What moments or phrases stick with you?

The part where the director talked about his son and how he interpreted his world were particularly impactful.

"We are all translators"

also, "be a neutron star"

Who would you recommend this podcast to, if anyone?

Anybody who would listen. I feel like my grandma would be particularly interested in this, not to say that it caters to an older audience at all.

Finally, where do you see this podcast going in the future? What other topics would you be interested in hearing about through this format?

I think the idea of "colliding" three seemingly unrelated fields in order to gain new outlooks is a novel concept in itself. I feel like you could continue on the concept of translation itself even though that wasn't really the point. This is altogether just a very interesting idea.

The Collision Project: Feedback

On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 = low and 5 = high), how would you rate the overall success of the podcast in making you think about the topic in a new way?

1

2

3

4

5

On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 = unlikely and 5 = very likely), how likely is it that you would subscribe to more episodes like this one?

1

2

3

4

5

Was anything confusing to you about the episode? How would you make it less confusing?

I wasn't confused by anything, but my mind drifted during the gaming interview because I didn't understand it as much.

What was the most impactful part of the podcast to you? What moments or phrases stick with you?

I was impacted by the broad exploration of the definition of translation. I keep thinking about how that concept applies to so much more than language. Language was the obvious topic, and theatre I understood (and was fascinated by), but computer translation / game coding was a surprising and foreign concept to me.

Who would you recommend this podcast to, if anyone?

I would recommend this to my friends who are curious intellectuals. People who like to think and learn new things.

Finally, where do you see this podcast going in the future? What other topics would you be interested in hearing about through this format?

I can see this podcast being fairly regular. I am interested in the concept: bringing things together that would not normally be talked about together. That being said, I can't even imagine what else this podcast would discuss, so it makes me curious to see where it would go.

side note: felt a vibe similar to Hidden Brain, Invisibilia, and Ted Radio Hour

The Collision Project: Feedback

On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 = low and 5 = high), how would you rate the overall success of the podcast in making you think about the topic in a new way?

1

2

3

4

5

On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 = unlikely and 5 = very likely), how likely is it that you would subscribe to more episodes like this one?

1

2

3

4

5

Was anything confusing to you about the episode? How would you make it less confusing?

Your place ^{in the podcast} sits in an interesting place. I feel as if you are balanced between objectivity and having a strong opinion. I would personally like you to choose one or the other.

What was the most impactful part of the podcast to you? What moments or phrases stick with you?

I liked how every section had a theme that felt organic... probably because it was!

Who would you recommend this podcast to, if anyone?

people who already listen to podcasts/video essays. Especially the "translation" episode is not going to appeal to a broader audience at first.

Finally, where do you see this podcast going in the future? What other topics would you be interested in hearing about through this format?

You ask them all the same questions, I would be hooked from the beginning if you ^{let us} ~~ask~~ know that they are all the same ~~same~~ questions

Translation builds bridges
I feel like something that didn't get analyzed enough: the problems with translation
On being Harry Potter

The Collision Project: Feedback

On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 = low and 5 = high), how would you rate the overall success of the podcast in making you think about the topic in a new way?

→ must be directed from the start

1

2

3

4

5

On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 = unlikely and 5 = very likely), how likely is it that you would subscribe to more episodes like this one?

1

2

3

4

5

Was anything confusing to you about the episode? How would you make it less confusing?

— what's at stake?

↳ cleaner introduction, set up the questions, unfold throughout the podcast

— Transitions b/w interviews, how did you find these people?

What was the most impactful part of the podcast to you? What moments or phrases stick with you?

The nature play and questing — airplane in the sky
"that's something and it's there!"

The idea that pregame was mechanisms and hope for the aesthetic outcome

↳ the impact of audience as a pivotal role of translation

→ left level of translation from diff. angles. What's it like to be on the receiving end of a translation?

Who would you recommend this podcast to, if anyone?

HS students, everyone?

Finally, where do you see this podcast going in the future? What other topics would you be interested in hearing about through this format?

I see it as a HP inspired text + this american life + on being
any topic really could work but if we stick
w/ theme you might want to keep along lines of
vague verbs/actions eg. translation, exploration etc. etc.

talk abt things truly to talk
about.

through
you.

Don - perfection.



Bastie
Structure

The Collision Project: Feedback

On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 = low and 5 = high), how would you rate the overall success of the podcast in making you think about the topic in a new way?

1

2

3

4

5

On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 = unlikely and 5 = very likely), how likely is it that you would subscribe to more episodes like this one?

1

2

3

4

5

Was anything confusing to you about the episode? How would you make it less confusing?

I didn't find anything especially confusing. Posing the initial topic and following a clear road ~~map~~^{map} helped with the overall clarity of the podcast.

What was the most impactful part of the podcast to you? What moments or phrases stick with you?

I loved the bowtie structure of the podcast. The way that you took the broad topic of translation and language, ~~and~~^{and} shared three different and diverse stories, and then connected the subject on a global scale was incredibly engaging!

Who would you recommend this podcast to, if anyone?

Artists from different walks of life. Honestly, I would want to share this with as many people as possible. I feel as though everyone should try and expand their knowledge and gain perspective on how other people live their lives.

Finally, where do you see this podcast going in the future? What other topics would you be interested in hearing about through this format?

Providing a platform to discuss different perspectives on one topic. Perspective is something that many people do not have access to and so they're only able to see one side. This opens the floor to topics regarding hot button issues today or even topics that aren't ~~discussed~~ discussed.

The Collision Project: Feedback

— Translation in a new way —
Translating is Communicating

On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 = low and 5 = high), how would you rate the overall success of the podcast in making you think about the topic in a new way?

1

2

3

4

5

On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 = unlikely and 5 = very likely), how likely is it that you would subscribe to more episodes like this one?

1

2

3

4

5

* Don't listen to many podcasts —
should listen more!

Was anything confusing to you about the episode? How would you make it less confusing?

The episode was effective in structure and was easy to follow. I really enjoyed the structure and

length: a little too long ~ minutes shorter / or longer

What was the most impactful part of the podcast to you? What moments or phrases stick with you?

"Be like ~~also~~ neutrons stars"

The
I really ~~enjoyed~~ enjoyed the parts in which you made connections with the interviewees. Connecting the bridges between the interviewees was highly effective.

Who would you recommend this podcast to, if anyone?

Any of my friends who speak outside the box,
who speak about ideas

Finally, where do you see this podcast going in the future? What other topics would you be interested in hearing about through this format?

I see this podcast going very far amongst
other podcasts - I see you doing this
same exact thing with other topics and
each podcast specifically tackling
ideas similar to ~~the~~ translation/humans/

*Sister episodes! Yes!

- Translation
- Competition
- Religion
- Food

The Collision Project: Feedback

On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 = low and 5 = high), how would you rate the overall success of the podcast in making you think about the topic in a new way?

1 2 3 4 5
 Neutral

On a scale of 1-5 (with 1 = unlikely and 5 = very likely), how likely is it that you would subscribe to more episodes like this one?

1 2 3 4 5

Was anything confusing to you about the episode? How would you make it less confusing?

Nothing Confused me.

What was the most impactful part of the podcast to you? What moments or phrases stick with you?

Loved the star metaphor, you
have a great way of bringing
old topics back around again
I love this!

Who would you recommend this podcast to, if anyone?

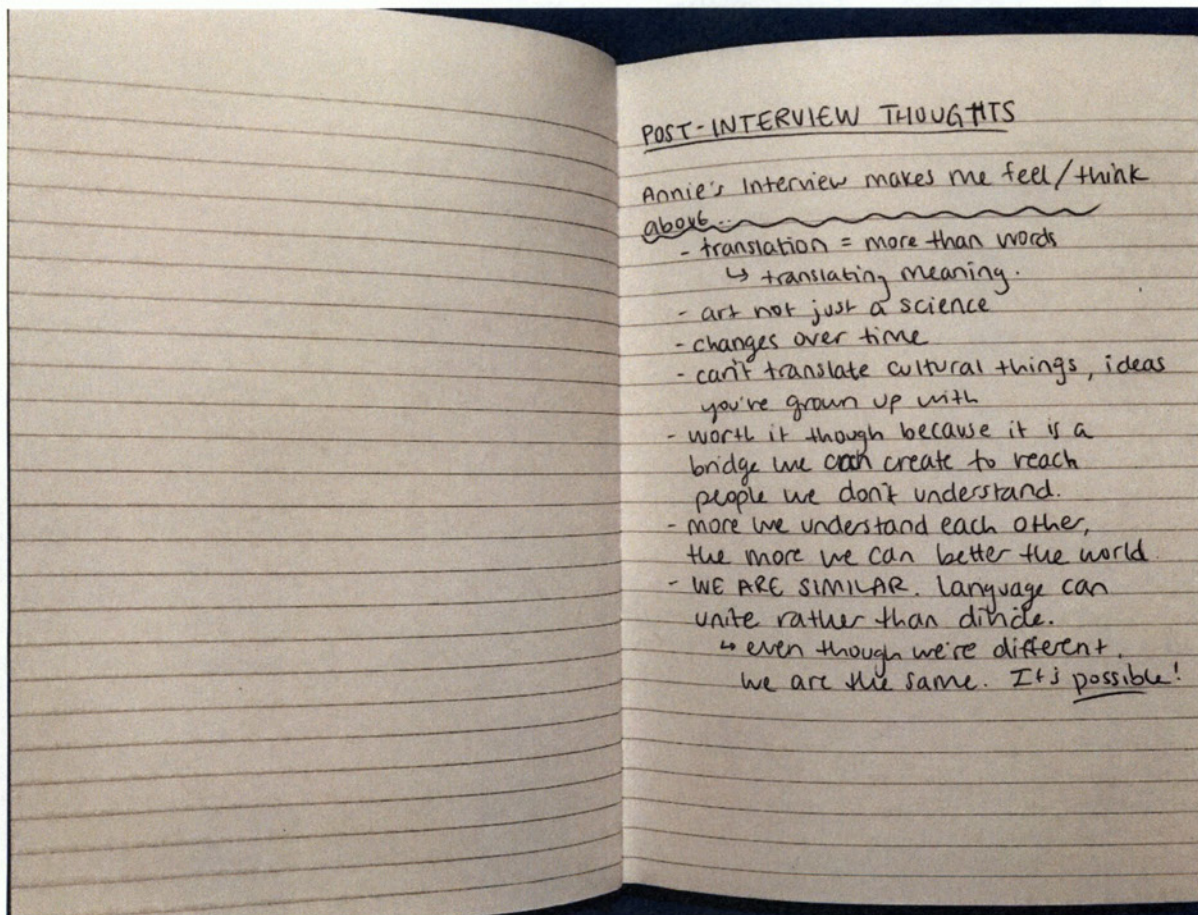
Kati and coope Cal.

Finally, where do you see this podcast going in the future? What other topics would you be interested in hearing about through this format?

Communication in all forms,
interviewing people in the same
work place, different countries
or maybe people from different
religions + observing how they
communicate about God.

Appendix B: Notes and Diagrams

In this appendix, I have included scanned images of my notebook referenced in my Process Analysis Statement.



Paul's interview makes me think about...

- analytical more than technological
 - ↳ not hard to write code, it's hard to figure out what code to write
- w/ technology, it's harder to communicate w/ humans.
 - ↳ STILL ABOUT HUMANS.
- more than just code
 - ↳ it's about meaning/emotion/reaction / RESPONSE!
- you can't plan for "aesthetics"
- help students understand complexity of the field. make it manageable
- like creating experiences for other people to have
 - ↳ reaction/feeling
- technology a means to create experiences...
- joy in making things that change the world
- "well yeah, let's do that!"

Matt's interview makes me think about...

- not about meaning... what does the play do
- all he wants is asking questions, not answering them.
 - ↳ still using something (theatre) to achieve some response - like tech/game design!
- intention and information

TITLE IDEAS

Think Tank

The Collision Project
I'm listening...
One step deeper
Just more questions

Collision [MOMENTS]

SO... Translation is...

